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Guide to Planning and Operating A Tourist Information Centre 1984

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Province of British Columbia

TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE

VOLUME III: GUIDE TO PLANNING AND OPERATING A TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

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INTENDED USE OF GUIDE

This guide is intended for use by those communities planning to set up and offer a tourist information service and also for use by those established operations which are considering improvements.

All tourist information centres in BC should offer a high quality of service and a well maintained facility. They should also follow a consistent set of operating rules and work together towards some specific objectives. This guide outlines BC's network concept for continuity in running Tourist Information Centres. It also presents some standards and guides for centre design and on-site signage. While this guide does not represent a blueprint for success, it does present some operational ideas which have helped to make some existing centres successful.

As a result of the changing economic environment and the variety of factors affecting investment decisions across BC, there are no perfectly applicable rules. The rules, guides, or examples expressed here in terms of numbers or dollars are based on the experience of several existing BC Tourist Information Centres and on the application of available research. However, there has been no attempt to account for efficiency questions. This guide is to be used for ideas, as a baseline or reference document, and as an introduction to TIC operations. It does not cover all the details of operation. Individual situations can therefore be expected to vary somewhat from the examples or rules presented herein. (All figures used in this guide are expressed in 1983 dollars.)

GUIDE TO PLANNING AND OPERATING A TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

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CHAPTER 1

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

What is a Tourist Information Centre?

The local tourist information centre (TIC) holds a "front-line" position in the hospitality program of any tourist-oriented community. It is an important link in the chain of activities aimed at encouraging, developing, and enlarging the tourist industry of an area. A TIC is specifically designed and staffed to offer friendly guidance and information as well as to provide an opportunity for travellers to rest and orient themselves. It acts as an important welcoming device for tourists to the community and to BC as a whole.

The purpose of the Tourist Information Centre

A TIC can positively affect the way tourists view their visit. It presents an opportunity to make visitors aware of aspects of the local area which are of particular interest to them. It presents an opportunity to build realistic expectations in the visitor's mind by addressing detailed information requests and by offering the benefits of personal experience. In this way, the TIC helps visitors make the best use of their limited time. When responding to the visitor's information needs, the staff of the TIC can also promote or highlight the features of local tourist attractions.

In summary, the purpose of a TIC is to provide information services in order to increase the visitor's awareness of local and provincial tourism products, and to generally enhance the quality of the visitor's experience.

A Serious Commitment

Running a TIC requires that considerable energies be applied to planning and project coordination. It also involves a significant financial investment to cover the capital and operating costs.

Before embarking on a TIC program, the following issues should be considered:

1. Is there (potentially) a tourist orientation in the community?

2. Does the area want to attract more tourists?

3. How many businesses derive a significant portion of their revenue from tourists?
   (Include - accommodation properties,
   - food and beverage operations
   - attractions
   - tourist oriented shops)

4. Does the community appreciate the financial impact of tourism?

5. Is the business community (particularly the tourist sector) willing to contribute financially to the project?

6. Is the municipal government interested and involved in promoting tourism?

7. Is the municipal government willing to financially support tourism through a TIC?

The responses to these questions will indicate the level of commitment which a TIC project is likely to get.

Should a Community Have a Tourist Information Centre?

Tourists will not stop every 16 km simply because an attractive TIC sits at the side of the highway. A community should establish a TIC to address a poorly serviced tourist need. The following situations could indicate the existence of an unserviced tourism need:

- Local businesses servicing highway traffic are experiencing an increase in tourism-related inquiries. This is approaching a level which is regarded as a burden.

- There is an increase in tourist traffic, but there is no change in the number of tourists stopping in the local area.

- There are new tourist attractions developing which make the community more of a destination area.

Although many factors are involved in deciding whether an area requires a TIC, a good rule of thumb from the provincial perspective is:

> The economic viability of a TIC can be questioned if the expected annual operating budget exceeds the expected total personal inquiry level by a factor of two or more.

When the concept of local benefits is focused upon, the economic rule of thumb must be altered slightly as follows:

> From a local perspective, a TIC may encourage visitor expenditure locally as a substitution for an expenditure in another area of BC.
>
> It is estimated that each personal inquiry (which represents an average of 2.5 people) provides on average, an additional net income of $2.40 to the local tourist operations and to the employees of these operations.

Economics is certainly not the only consideration, but it provides a perspective for assessing the impact of tourist inquiries. (The volume of inquiries that may be expected if a TIC is in operation may be best estimated by a local traffic survey.)

The Benefits of a Tourist Information Centre

Economic Effects

TICs do not directly generate tourist revenues, so the extent of their impact is not immediately obvious. The economic benefits to a community from the operation of a TIC include:

- the profits and operating income of tourist establishments
- the wages earned by people who would otherwise be unemployed
- local property taxes.

Positive Word of Mouth Advertising

A positive personal recommendation from a friend is a very persuasive form of advertising. The activities of TIC staff can help visitors enjoy their vacation and therefore help stimulate this type of promotion.

Encourage Return Visits

Tourists come to BC because of the outdoor opportunities, specific attractions, and to visit friends. If they can be made aware of unique, appealing tourism features which they were unable to experience, then the seeds for future trips have been planted. TICs can help in this role.

Other Benefits

Additional benefits associated with TICs are:

- they stimulate the local commitment to tourism
- they provide meaningful seasonal employment
- they can reduce environmental degradation
- they can distribute tourists and tourism benefits around BC.

The Tourist Information Centre Network

The Ministry of Tourism has chosen a plan which will see a network of TICs established by 1986. This network consists of:

Provincially-run centres
Local A centres
Local B centres
Local Unmanned centres

The network concept encourages cooperation among a large number of relatively independent local centres and promotes the creation of a corporate identity. At the same time, it allows the use of unique facility designs. The network will promote the use of centres and will make it easier for tourists to recognize them. To become a member of the network, each centre must meet a specific set of criteria which cover such topics as staff, training, hours of operation, facilities, displays, and signage.

The primary difference between the two types of local centres is in the emphasis on local area promotion -- the "Local A" centres take a more regional approach in their presentation. This requires a wider range of knowledge about the surrounding areas and often requires more emphasis on visitor trip planning. The Local A Centres will

- distribute visitors throughout the region
- promote regional attractions
- promote local attractions.

The local B Centres will focus on local promotional activities.

Members of the network are eligible to receive the following benefits:

- standardized highway approach signs
- Tourism BC entrance banners
- all provincially produced promotional tourist brochures
- an official BC Tourism Tourist Information Centre Network emblem for door or window
- the Travel Counsellor wage subsidy program
- a proposed facilities improvement assistance program
- a wall map of BC with the tourist regions and TICs marked on it
- copies of the limited production "Super Natural" wall posters
- a listing of the telephone numbers and addresses of all network TICs in the Tourism BC Accommodation Guide
- "Travel Information" badges for staff
- official BC pins
- a reference manual.

Sponsorship of a Tourist Information Centre

The Ministry of Tourism operates TICs near the major provincial entry points. The promotional efforts of these centres cover the distribution of material pertaining to BC, the nine tourist regions, the provincial parks, and the immediate area. As a general rule, the provincial centres carry brochures that relate to routing, attractions, and events of community interest. Brochures relating to major destination resorts are carried, but not those relating strictly to individual hotels, motels, restaurants, or other commercial establishments.

Local TICs are primarily established to provide information on the tourist attractions and properties in the area. Their orientation depends partly on the area's status as a destination or on-route location. This, in turn, determines the type of information visitors want.

Local TICs are usually operated by the Chamber of Commerce or Visitor and Convention Bureau. TICs operated by the Chamber of Commerce are usually overseen by a tourism committee with the Chamber Manager and staff running the centre. They are often operated out of the Chamber office and may also have a small seasonal booth operated on the main tourist thoroughfare. Visitor and Convention Bureaus tend to undertake a substantial promotional effort. Consequently, the scope of their operations go far beyond the information service provided by most TICs.

CHAPTER 2

PLANNING A TOURIST SERVICE

A Cooperative Option

If a need is identified for a new tourist information service, the first step should involve an examination of the nearest TIC operation along the major tourist route. Initially, it may be desirable to consider a cooperative effort because:

- it will test the support of the local tourist operators;
- allow time to produce attractive promotional brochures for the local properties; and
- keep the financial commitment to a minimum.

If this approach is taken, each community involved should supply at least one travel counsellor and all counsellors should become familiar with the local tourism products from both communities.

Seasonality

In areas with a high volume of tourists, the capital investment in a TIC is likely to be of a permanent nature. The seasonal nature of many tourist areas, however, dictates that the TICs concentrate their operations within the period of May 1 to September 30. TICs that use the premises of the sponsoring organization (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce) can maintain a token service in the offseason as well.

Choosing a Location

The primary consideration in choosing a TIC site is the convenience of the location for the greatest number of tourists. General factors include: where the major tourist traffic route is located and which access to the town is considered to be the "front door". A comprehensive traffic survey to determine the traffic pattern and density is a good starting point.

When selecting a location, the following factors should be considered:

(1) Can the service be easily identified on the site?

(2) Is the site convenient and readily accessible in terms of traffic safety? (If possible, it should be located where vehicle speed is low.)

(3) Are there adequate parking facilities?

(4) Will the site continue to be available for a long period of time on either a permanent or seasonal basis?

(5) Are there any restrictions, present or planned, on the use of the site? What are the municipal by-law requirements? Are there any other legalities?

(6) Can the site be properly serviced now, or is it likely to be in the future (e.g., telephone, washrooms, electricity, and other amenities)?

(7) Will new highway developments make the location obsolete? If so, when will a new site be required?

(8) What costs will be incurred to prepare the site?

(9) Should the information center facilities be permanent or portable?

(10) If there is to be a main centre location in the sponsor's office, should there be satellite centre(s) at a major traffic point (e.g., service station, shopping centre, transportation terminal)?

Although a TIC must lie on the major tourist traffic artery, there are basically two locational choices: on the outskirts of town or in town. The following table presents the advantages and disadvantages of these two options.

On the Outskirts of Town	In Town
Advantages	**Advantages**
It is desirable to catch tourists before they arrive in town; before they become confused.	If a TIC is located in the centre of town, only one well-placed and well-signed centre is needed.
If tourists are looking for accommodation, it is advisable to offer them choices before they reach the downtown core.	Traffic through town is often slower, making it easier to stop and visit the centre.
If there is a major highway or junction nearby, a well-placed TIC can catch highway travellers and direct them into town.	An in-town location can use available parking and cater to foot traffic.
There are good signing and parking development opportunities at the outskirts of town.	Once tourists are in the town, they have a better idea of what is available and it is easier to sell them on using a local facility.
	An in-town location serves the Association's (or Chamber's) needs better.

On the Outskirts of Town	In Town
Disadvantages	**Disadvantages**
Outskirt locations tend to attract traffic from only one direction along a highway. If major traffic flows occur in two directions, the best coverage may require two locations.	In-town locations can be congested and difficult to sign effectively. Parking and access for over-sized vehicles can be difficult in town where 90 degree corners are the norm. Prime in-town locations are not always available for TICs.

Both choices have merit and there are successful operations in BC in both locations. The choice depends on the individual traffic patterns and tourist draw for each individual town.

Signs

A TIC cannot rely on location alone to draw tourists. Clear on-site signs which are visible from about one-half kilometre away are also needed.

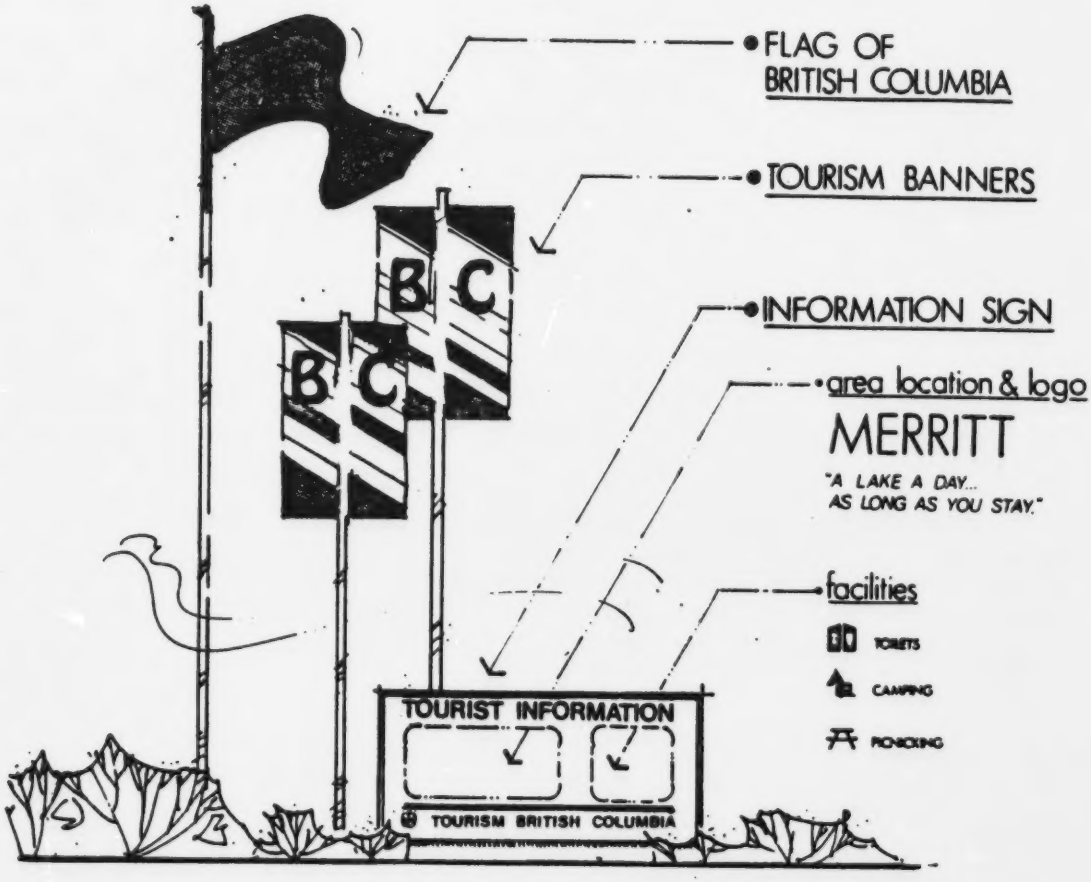
As part of developing an identify for TICs, the provincial network concept has adopted the sign, banner, and flag combination shown in Exhibit 2.1 to mark the entrance to a TIC. This will greatly improve the visibility and the speed of tourist recognition. The sign identifies the facility as an information centre and recognizes the sponsoring agency. The sign should also indicate whether or not the TIC is open and should be well lit. The banners add interest and will symbolize some aspect of the Ministry of Tourism's promotional image. This signage is particularly suited to roadside locations.

Approach signs are also very important. The Ministry of Highways provides a "?" sign for positioning 1 km from the TIC. If a centre is situated within a community, several arrow signs and "?" signs should be posted on the approaching traffic routes. Because of traffic congestion and tourists' unfamiliarity with town streets, in-town locations must be very clearly signed.

Facilities in a Tourist Information Centre

To function efficiently, a year-round TIC requires offseason heating, and air conditioning may be appropriate for the summer months. Other basic requirements include washrooms and a telephone. (These may be available from adjoining businesses.) Large centres need separate washroom facilities for staff and visitors. Most centres need at least one staff telephone and an outside pay telephone for visitors to use.

EXHIBIT 2.1: ENTRY SIGNAGE



(This allows use of the telephone after hours by visitors.)

Every centre should have the following furnishings:

- ample counter space for Travel Counsellors to spread out maps when counselling visitors
- a stool or chair behind the counter for the Counsellor's comfort when serving a visitor
- a brochure display area which is accessible to tourists (e.g., wall racks or rotary, pillar style racks)
- brochure racks or a storage area which is handy to the counsellor behind the counter
- a bulk storage area and a filing cabinet with a lock
- a current events notice board
- poster display space
- a large display map of the local area
- waste baskets, both inside and outside
- a first aid kit
- a fire extinguisher.

Visitor comfort is very important. The reception area should be large enough to accommodate peak expected visitor volumes. It should not be crowded or cluttered, and it should include seating and ashtrays. Many larger centres also provide a table with a bench or chairs for tourists to sit and examine maps and brochures.

Many visitors are thirsty when they arrive at the TIC and appreciate the availability of a drinking fountain either indoors or outdoors. Some centres offer coffee either free or at a minimal charge. (Soda-pop vending machines are not common in TICs. Some managers feel they add an unwanted commercial flavour and others, with limited facilities, want to discourage the use of the centre as a picnic area.)

When sufficient space is available, handicrafts, locally produced products, and local historical or industrial displays can be showcased.

The physical environment should emphasize service and information. TICs must be careful to avoid competing with local souvenir merchants and must avoid a commercialized image. Operations that choose to offer souvenirs for sale should use a limited display which is clearly separate from the free promotional brochures and literature. Some items sold in TICs include:

- postcards
- stamps (vending machines)
- detailed street maps
- recreation and fishing maps
- topographic maps
- bumper stickers
- pins.

Because of the added responsibility of handling cash and the minor revenues involved, some TICs do not sell any items.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN CONCEPTS

Identity

All Tourist Information Centres should be easily identifiable to the visitor. The TIC network in BC has chosen to develop a corporate identity through the use of a consistent approach to signage, layout, and facilities. The building design concept, which can act as a guideline for new centres, is attractive and allows the inclusion of a local flavour. The exterior design is particularly suitable for roadside locations but may not be appropriate for all applications (e.g., it may be more appropriate to use an existing building for an in-town TIC location). In any case, it is advisable to leave the final choice of colours, lighting, layout and application of the design up to an architect.

Design Guidelines

The consistency of the TIC building design is based on the use of three materials which can be used to symbolize BC: wood, stone, and metal. In addition, water should be incorporated into the landscape where possible. The final design can be altered to suit a local interpretation.

e.g. stone - may be Squamish rock, BC jade or granite
metal - may be polished steel or chrome or prerusted steel
wood - may be cedar, pine, or fir.

The structure has been used to create a distinctive image. The consistent use of a wooden structural "tree" is symbolic of BC's forests. If a "woodsy" image is inappropriate for the surroundings, the "tree" can be created from metal, resulting in an urban image.

When a new TIC is considered, the design should address the major needs of the sponsoring organization and should be of a size which reflects the expected visitor volume during the peak season. Some major size determining factors are:

- size of reception/display area (reflects the visitor handling capacity)
- number of travel counsellors working at the centre
- amount of on-site storage needed
- need for office space
- need for in-building washrooms.

Provincial/Regional Centre

This facility design may be used by BC Tourism or by a large local centre. Its size (1,600 sq ft) allows the handling of 20,000 to 50,000 inquiries during the summer. This corresponds to a summer peak inquiry rate of 250 to 600 inquiries per day. This TIC is designed to allow 3 to 5 travel counsellors to work at the centre at one time and will tend to be used on a year round basis.

The building program can be described as follows:

	Area (sq ft)
a) Visitor Area	
- proper signage - racks, including rotating and wall - display area for posters, topographical maps, etc. - local interest interpretive display and seating area for reading brochures	500
- washrooms, (including handicap facilities) for men, women and staff; design should allow access from visitor area to enable staff to monitor usage	300
b) Work Space	
- counter space; provide easy access from storage area to behind counter; allow for adjustable shelves under counter	50
- work and stool area (behind counter)	150
c) Office Space	
- allow for desk, with typewriter run off, chair, file cabinet and 2 visitor chairs - office should allow supervisor to view visitor area - can be used as supervisor's office and/or interview room	100
d) Circulation and lost wall space	150
e) Storage Area, Staff Coffee Area & Mechanical	
- allow for bulk supplies (floor storage) and metal shelving to support heavy items - allow outside access for delivery of bulk literature; should have either a delivery ramp or a loading area (no stairs)	350
Total Interior Space	1600

EXHIBIT 3.1: PROVINCIAL/REGIONAL CENTRE: SITE

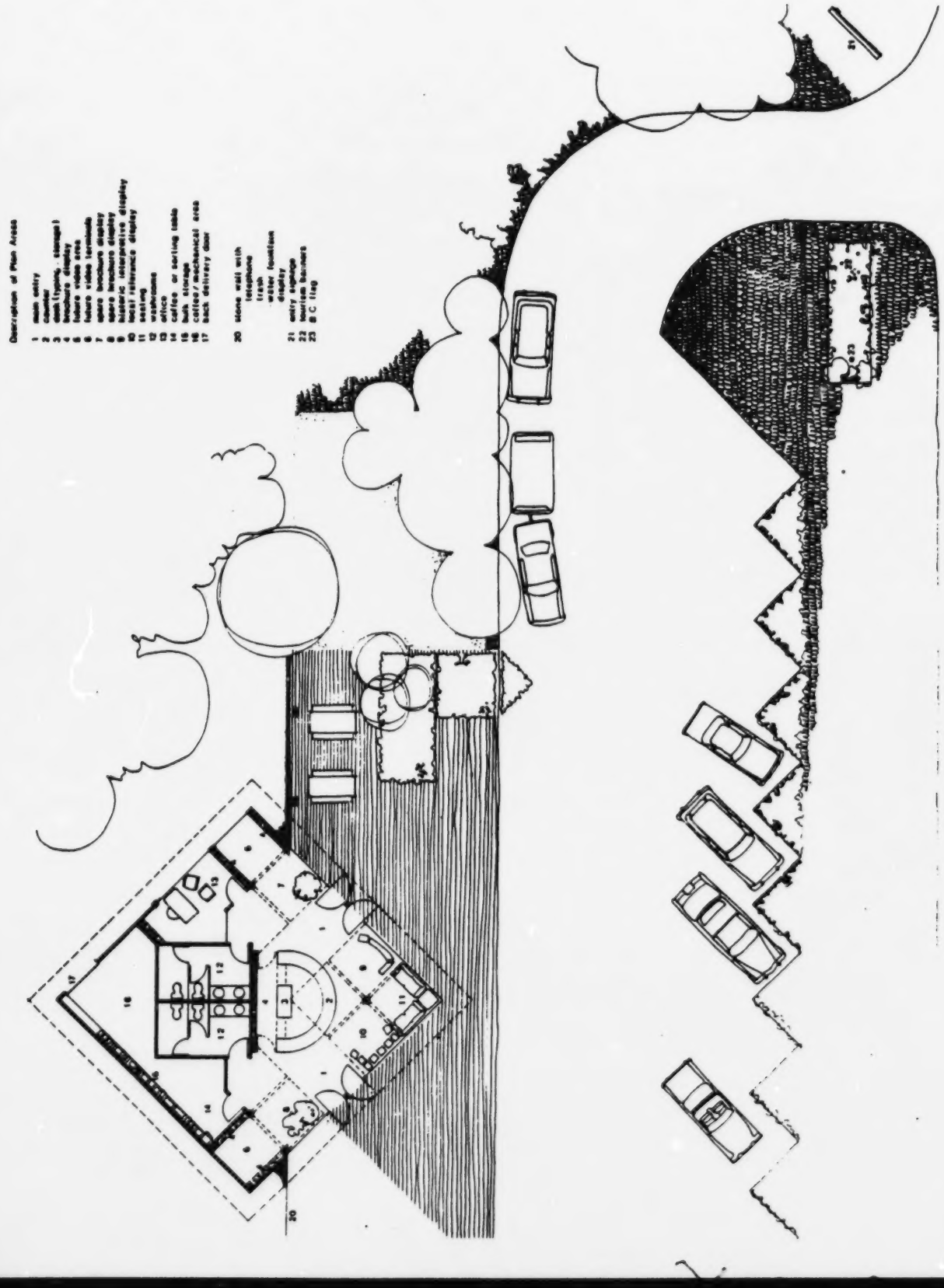
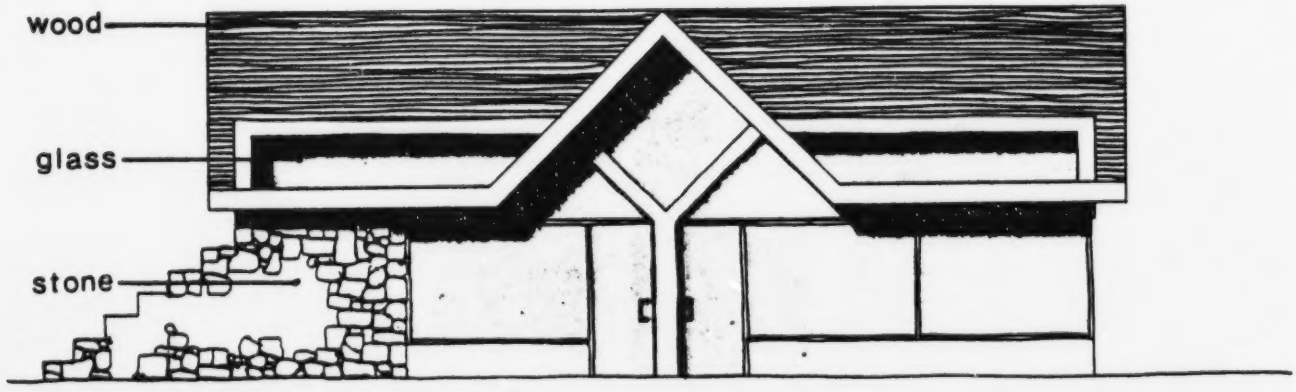
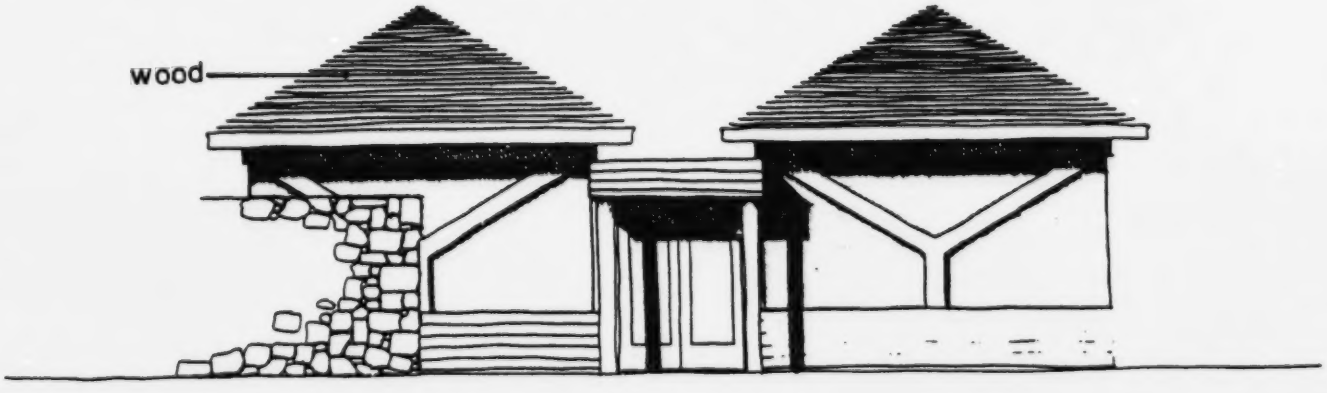


EXHIBIT 3.2: PROVINCIAL/REGIONAL CENTRE: DESIGN

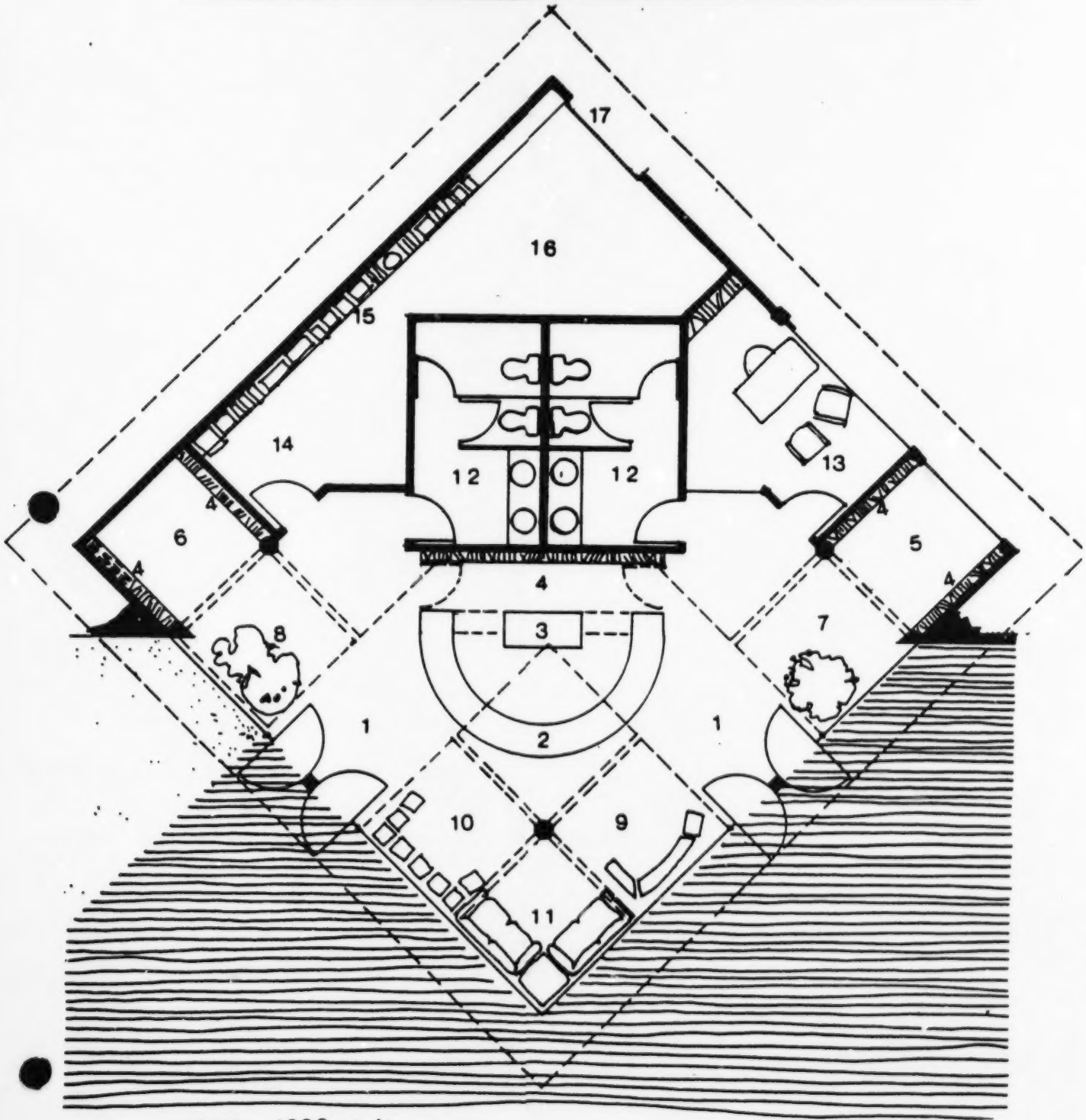


entry alternative



entry alternative

EXHIBIT 3.3: PROVINCIAL/REGIONAL CENTRE: PLAN



area: 1600 sq. ft.

scale: 0 1 3 6 10 ft.

f) Siting and Exterior

- Site area: one acre
- generous pull-off road and stopping area
- entry flags, sign and generous pull-on
- parking; allow for pull-through and single spots; 15-35 parking spaces with 50% oversized
- lighting, signage and vandalism protection
- signage, both onsite and highway
- display kiosk, suitably sheltered; preference given to a lockable display area which may eliminate vandalism and restrict the posting of unauthorized items
- service items to include sewer or septic, water, hydro, telephone, heat, air conditioning
- grounds landscape is significant, with small people area if possible
- facade of building should complement the area, keeping in mind the elements of the region (e.g., paint peels in intense heat or extreme cold)
- exterior telephone available to public
- exterior water fountain available to public

Exhibit 3.1 illustrates site layout for a new regional sized centre. Exhibits 3.2 and 3.3 illustrate the building design concept and the interior plan, respectively.

Local Centre

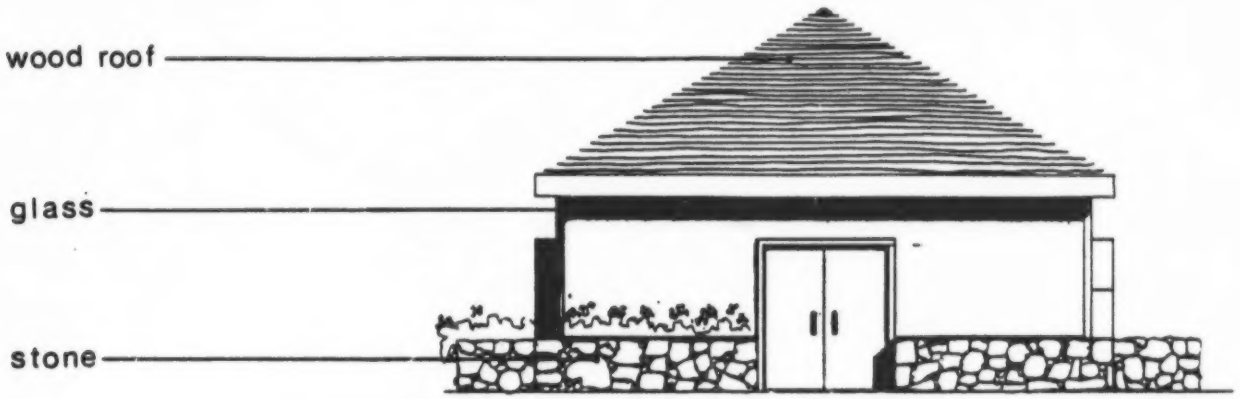
This facility design is based on 600 sq ft of area and is suitable for smaller provincial centres or medium sized local centres. It is designed to handle 8,000 to 20,000 inquiries during the summer season. This corresponds to a peak inquiry rate of 125 to 250 inquiries per day. This TIC is designed to allow 2 to 3 travel counsellors to work at the centre at one time and may be operated seasonally or year round.

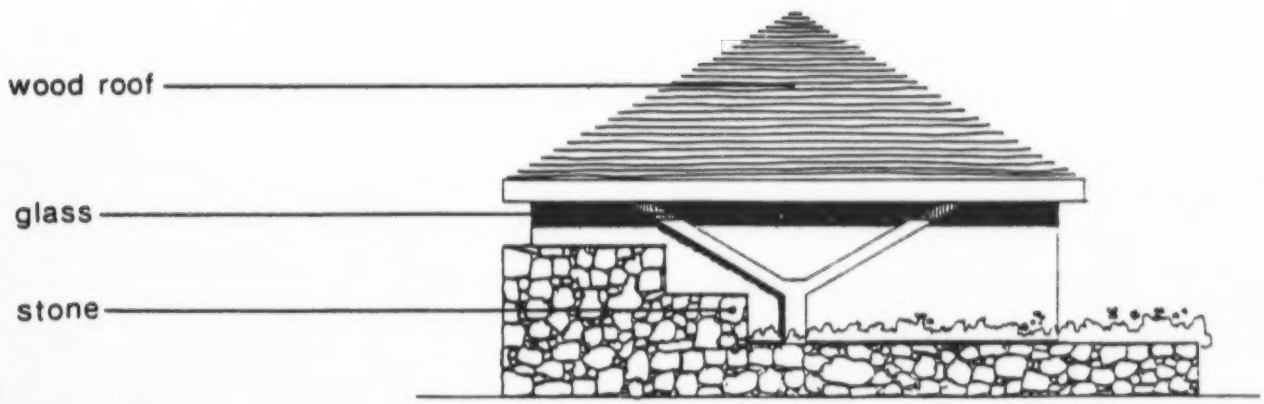
The building program can be described as follows:

	Area (sq ft)
a) Visitor Area	270

- proper signage
- display of brochures
- display of posters and maps
- local interest interpretive area
- washrooms: two only, one with handicap access

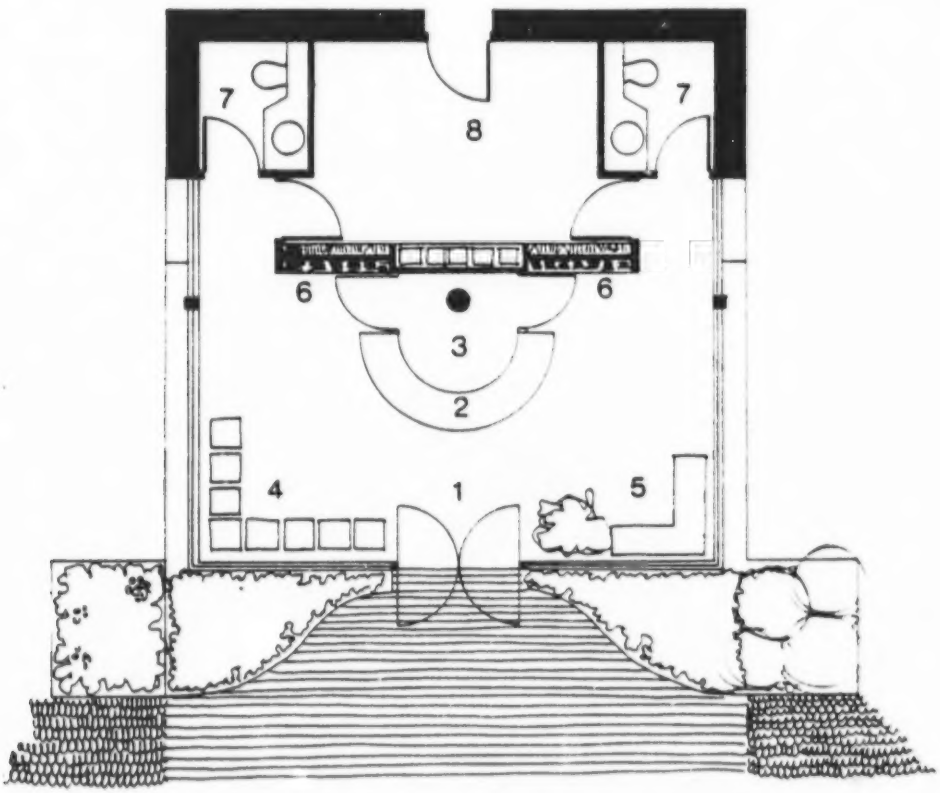
EXHIBIT 3.4: LOCAL CENTRE: DESIGN





side elevation

EXHIBIT 3.5: LOCAL CENTRE: PLAN



area: 600 sq. ft.

scale: 0 1 3 6 10 ft.

legend of use:

1 entry
2 reception
3 behind counter storage
4 local interest display
5 seating
6 brochure
7 washroom
8 storage and mechanical

b) Work Space
- counter space 20
- work area behind counter, including storage wall, chairs, and small office space 100

c) Circulation and lost wall space 60

d) Storage and Mechanical 150

Total Interior Space 600

e) Siting and Exterior

- site area: 0.5 acres
- parking: 10 to 15 spaces with 50% oversized
- facility: telephone
- signage, flags, landscaping and lighting to be the same as "Provincial/Regional Centre"

Exhibits 3.4 and 3.5 illustrate the building design concept and the interior plan, respectively, for a new local sized centre.

Unmanned Centre

This facility is a low-cost alternative for the provision of tourist information and is most suitable for use in a highway pulloff location. The extent of capital investment would vary with the scope of the facility installed. A major benefit would be the low operating costs due to the lack of staff requirements.

The facility should provide a covered display area where visitors can stand (or use benches to rest) to examine the information displays which should be clear and self-explanatory. A primary display should involve one or more large-scale, detailed wall maps which shows:

- the highway structure for a wide area around the site
- the street layout for the sponsoring communities
- the location of services available in the surrounding communities
- the location of sponsoring tourist businesses, e.g.,
  - . hotels
  - . restaurants
  - . attractions

  (the names of these businesses should be listed by category on the side of the map.)

Brochures cannot be conveniently dispensed so it is important to make use of permanent displays which can convey similar information. Pictorial displays of attractions or a display of brochures behind glass can show the attractiveness of local tourist offerings even though the details inside the brochure cannot be effectively displayed in this manner. The structure used should allow for easy periodic changing of display items. The provision of a local bulletin board may also be helpful.

Each unmanned centre should include a pay telephone and a drinking fountain. The provision of washroom facilities is desirable, but they are costly and require constant maintenance. The structure and displays should be also be designed to avoid vandalism. If a Ministry of Highways site is used, the highways department will assist in the general upkeep of the grounds. Clearly, this type of facility is a passive information centre which is best suited to low-volume locations or to communities which have few tourist oriented businesses and very limited tourism development budgets. Exhibit 3.6 illustrates a suggested design for an unmanned centre.

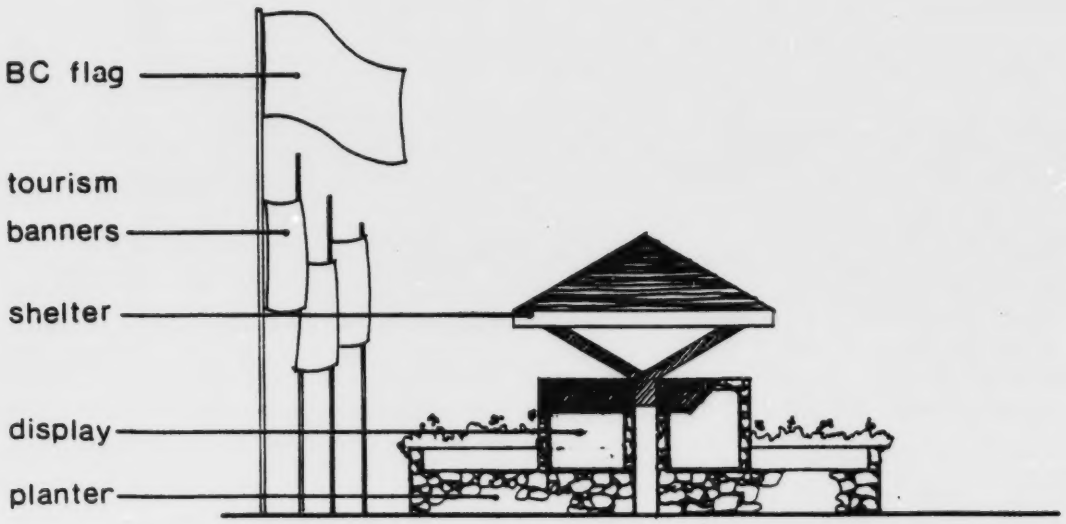
Satellite Centre

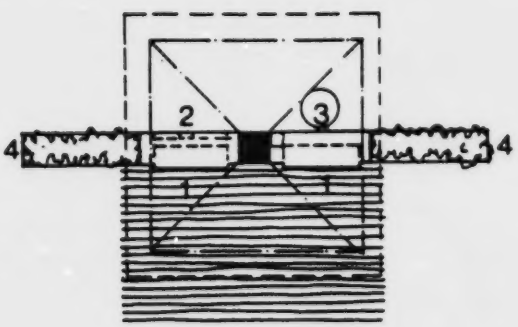
This facility may be used as an extension of a major local centre or used on its own in smaller volume applications. Its size is small and it has a very restricted work and storage space. When it is operated as a satellite, the main centre would provide the storage and office space as required. This TIC would be used on a seasonal basis and is capable of handling 3,000 to 8,000 inquiries over the summer. This volume corresponds to a peak inquiry rate of 45 to 125 inquiries per day. The TIC is designed to be staffed by 1 or 2 travel counsellors at one time.

The building program can be described as follows:

	Area (sq ft)
a) Visitor Area	100
- proper signage - display of brochures - display of posters/map	
b) Work Space	
- counter space	20
- work area behind counter	30
c) Circulation and lost wall space	50
d) Storage and Mechanical	50
Total Interior Space	250

EXHIBIT 3.6: UNMANNED CENTRE





area : as required

scale: 0 1 3 6 10

legend of facilities

1 display

2 telephone

3 water fountain

4 planter

e) Siting and Exterior

- site area: largely up to the discretion of the sponsoring organization. (This centre is a low-cost structure and a minimum of land area is typically used. The actual size will often depend on the site available.)

- parking: 5 to 10 spaces with 50% oversized

- facility: telephone

- signage, flags and lighting similar to the "Local Centre".

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION

Information Requests

The TIC must be able to provide information which is current and accurate to the limit of the staff's resources. Tourist inquiries are principally concerned with:

- directions
- overnight accommodation
- campgrounds and picnic sites
- local attractions
- local activities.

These are broad categories and they point out that information must be collected on many subjects within the community. While personal familiarity with the major points of interest in a community is mandatory, there is also a need for an up-to-date reference manual in the centre. The bulk of the information in the manual should pertain to the local community, but it should also reflect major tourist informational needs beyond the community boundaries.

The reference manual should include the following information:

- Hotels/Motels -- although they are listed in the BC Accommodation Guide, their rates and amenities should be checked and set up for convenient reference

- Bed and Breakfast offerings -- same comment as above

- Campgrounds, private and public -- same comment as above

- Restaurants -- listed by type of food; include hours of operation and whether or not they are licensed

- Local Services -- list should include gas stations, laundromats, and sani-dump stations

- Local Tourist Attractions, Events, Festivals, etc. -- list should include contacts and telephone numbers.

Other subjects for consideration in the manual include:

- Activity/Resource Details -- e.g., fishing areas, hiking trails, scuba diving locations, playing fields, tennis courts

- Regulations -- e.g., hunting and fishing regulations, boating regulations, customs regulations

- Transportation -- e.g., train and bus schedules, ferry schedules, local public transit information

- Industrial Tours -- e.g., firm names, location, industry and start times.

- Agricultural Interests -- e.g., seasonal fruit.

All centres should post basic service information in a visible location. Such information includes:

- banking and store hours
- exchange rates
- service or other club meetings
- hours and location of church services
- emergency medical or dental telephone numbers
- police bulletins.

In destination areas, TICs might consider producing a two-week events calendar which is updated and posted weekly.

To increase local appeal, each TIC should carefully examine its tourism products and prepare either walking or auto tours of various lengths. (These may be theme oriented.) Organized packages encourage the use of local products, increase the appeal of a community, and are easy for tourists to take advantage of. Each tour should be outlined on a handout with the attractions marked on a rough map and briefly described in a side note.

Brochure Displays

The basic information brochures handled by most TICs include:

BC Government publications

- BC Road Map
- BC Accommodation Guide
- Travellers Handbook
- Provincial Parks pamphlets
- Provincial regulation pamphlets about fishing, hunting, and boating

Regional Vacation Guide

Community Map and Guide -- often includes street maps, point of interests, recreation areas, things to do, history, hotels and motels, restaurants, churches

Private promotional brochures for attractions, accommodation properties, restaurants, shops.

The policies for accepting private brochures for display vary throughout BC. Each TIC should have a clearly defined policy which should be administered by the manager of the TIC. In situations where the TIC is run by seasonal employees, the policy should be administered by a designated member of the sponsoring organization. A suggested policy outline follows:

1. All private brochures to be displaced must be
   - of reasonable quality
   - of a standard design such that they fit the display racks
   - informative
   - composed of material which is likely to interest tourists
   - attractively presented
   - socially acceptable
   - not misleading

2. Subject to 1., brochures will be accepted for display according to the following priorities and criteria:

   1st Priority: brochures representing businesses which are members in good standing in the sponsoring organization

   2nd Priority: brochures representing hospitality businesses and attractions which are located in the surrounding area or which lie along the major tourist routes, and which meet <u>all</u> of the following criteria:
   - are members of the Regional Tourist Association governing the location of the business concerned
   - are not considered to be in direct competition with members of the local sponsoring organization
   - are considered to be appealing to local TIC visitors.

Travel counsellors should not be restricted to answering questions which only pertain to members of the sponsoring organization. Any local product which interests or is used by a visitor will benefit local tourism and the community as a whole.

Many TICs display vacation guides and generic community brochures from surrounding regions. These brochures, along with promotional material from border states and provinces, may be helpful to some tourists and will round out the display. These brochures should not, however, take up prime display space. When visitors view the display, their eyes should naturally fall on the local and regional material first.

Brochure Presentation

The type and quality of the reference material displayed in the TIC is very important to the success of the centre. The displays should be closely supervised because visitors are confused by unorganized masses of information. The displays should avoid repetition and overlap, and should be maintained to avoid stock depletion and bare spots.

When visitors enter a TIC, they seldom know which brochures they want -- sometimes they haven't decided on a particular type of attraction or activity. Most tourists, however, have decided on a specific destination or route. Therefore, a good way to organize the brochures is by geographic area. Within each area, the brochures should be grouped by subject (e.g., accommodation, restaurants, shops, etc.). It is important that the brochure groupings be clearly labelled. This allows tourists to focus immediately on a particular subject or area.

Local community information should be displayed separately, in a prime location. It should also be clearly marked.

The three most commonly used display racks are the wall rack, the A-frame rack, and the rotary pillar rack. Most racks are made of metal or wood, and are designed to hold a standard 4" by 9" brochure. Some racks feature plastic retainers which allow the entire brochure to be viewed.

To maintain a neat appearance racks should be stocked every day and extra brochures stored out of sight. Brochures should not be piled on counters or tables.

Some centres have difficulty maintaining full racks. This is partly because some brochures are very popular and partly because some tourist operators remove quantities of brochures for their own needs. If the problem persists, consideration should be given to moving the brochure display behind the counter, while making sure it is still visible to visitors. Visitors will then be given the desired brochures during the counselling process. If this approach is adopted, the display area should focus on the provision of information (pictures and operating details) which is most commonly requested.

Maps and Posters

Maps are very important tools for tourists. Each TIC should have at least one large scale wall map showing the TIC location and its relationship to the surrounding area, if not the whole province. The map should indicate:

- the major road structure
- the major communities
- the location of other TICs
- the location of the major surrounding attractions.

For TICs in a large community or in a destination area, a more appropriate wall map would indicate:

- the main streets
- the location of points of interest
- the location of accommodation and attractions which support the TIC.

If the counselling counter has a glass top, it is often convenient to have a BC Road Map or a local street map spread out under the glass. In rural areas, displayed topographic or anglers' wall maps are a great help to outdoor-oriented tourists.

As long as is it is not overdone, a few colourful posters of local events or seasonal activities can add interest and life to the TIC.

Video and Computers

A video presentation is a powerful marketing tool. It is an excellent way to interest visitors in attractions or activities and it can be used to supplement the brochure displays. The video concept might include:

- a video unit with a rear projection wall screen
- a video cassette recorder/player with a TV monitor
- a (Kodak) caramate, which is a simple, automated slide projector with an audio tape and a small TV monitor.

Video units could provide one minute clips on local attractions which repeat every half-hour or a simple picture presentation of the region. In the future, video units could be used to display brochure-type information and thus reduce the paper storage area. However, at the present time, the system of colourful brochures which visitors can take away for further reference still offers the best general presentation.

Despite the growing use of computers in the business and home environment, visitors to most of the TICs in BC prefer the personal contact of a travel counsellor to interaction with a computer terminal. The micro computers available today could, however, be used to assist travel counsellors by providing fast, easy access to a detailed tourism data base. This data base would be a source of consistent information for travel counsellors. They could become familiar with it during slack periods and refer to it during counselling if required. In locations where a large manual data base is currently being used to serve the travelling public, a computer aided system would reduce the response time. For most TIC organizations, the cost of equipment and the cost of developing and maintaining the data base is prohibitive unless the system is developed for access by several TIC locations or at least by several travel counsellors.

Other Methods of Presentation

The follcwing information presentation methods have been used effectively in TICs throughout BC:

- a pictoral wall panel (using quality photographs) of a series of attractions or events
- a cork pin-up board where local operators can display inexpensively produced promotional notices (some businesses do not have the expertise or the finances to produce high quality brochures)
- a direct dial telephone connected to a reservation service. Each local accommodation property is displayed in a photograph or a brochure, along with their prices and amenities. Each property has a clearly marked 2-digit number which the visitors dial to connect them directly to the property's front desk. (The properties may also be identified by number on a wall map.)
- a vacancy board to indicate which accommodation properties are full -- the onus is on the operators to inform the TIC when they are full.
- a display of menus from local restaurants
- a roving counsellor. Some TICs require counsellors to tour the town once a week, greeting and assisting tourists. This often involves visits to campgrounds and attractions. It also keeps operators aware of the service provided by the TIC.
- encourage shops to display the TIC telephone number so visitors or shopkeepers can make a quick call when information is requested which the shopkeeper cannot provide.

CHAPTER 5

STAFFING THE INFORMATION CENTRE

General Parameters

Most TIC staff are employed on a seasonal basis, and are drawn from available students or retired and semi-retired members of the community. For year-round operations, permanent staff are usually required. Most TICs have their full complement of staff on duty each summer weekend, particularly on holiday weekends. Staff days-off are taken during the slower periods which normally occur during the middle of the week.

The number of staff needed in each TIC reflects the expected volume of inquiries and the operating hours. The centre's hours should reflect tourist needs. During the period from June 1 to August 31, many centres offer a 12-hour, 7 days a week service; typically from 8AM to 8PM. With counsellors working a 40-hour week, this level of service requires at least three staff members. (Some centres use only 2 staff members and offer a restricted service.) TICs offering a year-round service may use only one counsellor during the off-season.

The following set of rules can be used as a guide in estimating the number of counselling staff needed to offer full service:

Number of Centres	Estimated Volume of Personal Inquiries in a 3-Month Summer Period	No. of Counselling Staff
1	Under 10,000	3
1	10,000-20,000	4-5
1	Over 20,000	*
2	Each Under 10,000	5
3	Each Under 10,000	7-8

*For these large centres, the best rule is to divide the estimated number of inquiries by 4,500, and this will calculate the approximate number of counsellors needed.

These numbers are based on the experience of BC TICs, not on efficiency studies. Large centres will also require non-counselling staff, not covered in this guide.

Job Activities

Most TICs will have an organizational structure which include:

- a manager
- a supervisor
- travel counsellors.

In a large operation, the manager may have little to do with travel counselling activities, but in a small TIC the manager, supervisor, and senior counsellor may be the same person. While the division of labour will vary with each operation, the following is a general list of activities:

Travel Counsellor

. Respond to Visitor's Requests (personal & telephone)
  - answer questions
  - help plan trips
  - introduce local tourism products
  - encourage a longer stay by offering multiple activity options
  - encourage return visits

. Stock brochure racks and keep them organized

. Update the bulletin board
  - post the tourist alert
  - post road condition reports
  - post weather reports
  - post local events as they approach

. Maintain an awareness of local activities
  - clip articles from newspaper
  - establish a file for new events
  - confirm (or research) event details

. Record all personal and telephone inquiries

. Housekeeping
  - keep work area clean and organized
  - keep grounds tidy
  - keep washrooms clean

. Pick up mail

. Typing/secretarial duties (minor)

Supervisor

. Receive visitors and perform general travel counselling

. Respond to mail inquiries

. Hire staff

. Orient and train staff
  - on-the-job training
  - may include deciding who goes to travel counselling course and attending to related logistics

. Managing staff
  - ongoing supervision
  - performance review
  - duty allocation
  - staff scheduling

. Organize office
  - create a pleasant working environment
  - develop teamwork

. Assemble promotional package for special groups and functions

. Manage stock levels
  - monitor brochure inventories
  - order stocks as needed
  - record number of each used over summer (or year) for planning purposes

. Keep records
  - compile monthly volume statistics
  - complete payroll duties
  - prepare reports to sponsor
  - record expenses
  - prepare seasonal update of local reference manual

. Maintain communication with Regional Tourist Association

. Maintain communication with Tourism BC

. Maintain contact with local businesses and keep them informed about the operation of the centre

Hiring

The prime requirement of TIC employees is a friendly, enthusiastic, and cooperative disposition toward visitors. The following qualities and experience are considered to be valuable in TIC staff:

Travel Counsellor

Qualities:
- friendly
- patient
- good listener
- easy going and enthusiastic
- interested in people
- a team player
- interested in promoting tourism
- neat appearance
- good communication skills

Experience:
- knowledge of local area
- experience serving people (especially sales experience)
- personal travel experience in BC

- outdoor interests
- a second language (preference and need depends on the nationality mix of typical tourist traffic)
- typing skills

Supervisor

Qualities:
- same as for travel counsellor
- self-confident
- self-motivated
- tactful
- organized
- does not need close supervision

Experience:
- knowledge of local area
- sales skills (or strong interest in)
- general supervisory experience
- office environment experience
- employee evaluation skills
- leadership role

Staff Training

To provide a high quality of service, it is mandatory that a proper training program be provided for new recruits. Most TICs draw staff from the local graduating high school class or from first or second year college and university students who return home for the summer. These people are young and most are new to the job. They need a basic understanding of the scope of the work and the procedures to follow.

The Ministry of Tourism,in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, offers a Travel Counsellor's Techniques course through community college outlets. The 5-day course covers all aspects of travel counselling. The program includes a 10-step procedure for handling a visitor. The sales approach emphasized in the course involves:

- identifying the visitor's needs
- providing alternatives for the visitor
- letting the visitor make a choice
- making it easy for the visitor to extend his/her stay.

Course time is broken down as follows:

- 60% of class time is spent developing the skills required to perform key aspects of the job, e.g., greeting visitors, handling complaints, setting up a TIC, information retrieval, reading maps.

- 40% of the time is spent in a workshop where the students practice their jobs through role playing.

The job focuses on providing an information service, so naturally a considerable portion of time is spent on becoming aware of what information is readily available and what is the most efficient way to find and communicate it.

The course concludes with a 2-hour written exam.

The course has been well received by the travel counsellors who have taken it. It should form part of every travel counsellor's training. The course does not, however, cover the tourism products of various regions and does not cover local office procedures. Therefore, an inhouse training program is also necessary. It should cover such subjects as:

- an introduction to the sponsoring organization
- office orientation
- telephone techniques
- forms used
- complaint handling techniques
- sales techniques and available selling aids
- familiarization tours of the town and regional attractions
- on-the-job coaching.

The program may take a week to complete and should include two or three days of counselling work with a qualified staff member.

It is very important that travel counsellors be fully versed in the type and quality of the local accommodation, restaurant, and other tourism products. This can be accomplished by:

- organized visits to facilities to meet owners
- lectures on local history and industry
- regional travel movies.

(Some Regional Tourist Association managers organize regional familiarization tours and make arrangements for setting up the Travel Counsellor's Techniques course.)

The Ministry of Tourism offers two other courses for the industry:

. Hospitality (1 day): a course for "frontline" people in the hospitality industry. It covers the importance of the job, communication, and the importance of tourism.

. Hospitality Management (2 days): a course for managers. It covers hiring, staff motivation, writing job descriptions, managerial tasks.

Sales Approach

Promoting local products is an important part of a travel counsellor's job. Visitors on holiday tend to become interested in items about which the travel counsellor is enthusiastic. This requires a level of knowledge which comes from experiencing the products in question.

The sales approach must recognize the basic information needs of visitors as well as their timeframe. (Many tourists appear to be in a hurry and only want a map.) An effective approach is to ask, "Where are you going?, "How can I help you?", or "Is there anything in particular you are interested in?".

Once it is clear what route the visitors are taking and where their interests lie, it is simple to point out some local features about which visitors are likely unaware and which they might enjoy.

Tourists often ask for a recommendation or a comparison of local tourism features. The policy on referrals must be clearly defined. Most TICs will not recommend one business over another. The best approach is for the travel counsellor to try to determine the factors that are most important to the tourist (e.g., price, location) and then to describe the qualities of the alternatives. This allows the tourist to make the choice, and avoids the possibility of sponsoring businesses complaining of unfair representation.

Rewards and Performance

Although many travel counsellors are simply working at a summer job, the reward process for good performance is still important. The following are ways in which some managers reward and motivate their staff:

- showing that the job is important through personal dedication and enthusiasm
- helping during peak volume periods
- accommodating staff scheduling problems when possible
- offering verbal compliments when a particularly good job has been performed
- clearly expressing conduct and appearance expectations
- being receptive to staff suggestions and holding regular staff meetings (for about one-half hour, every 2 weeks)

- organizing a community recognition event at the end of the season, which could include such things as a barbecue or a lunch

- providing a letter of recommendation for departing staff

- offering the opportunity to work again the following year.

Even though most travel counsellors are short-term employees, it is important for them to know how they are progressing. This should be done as early as possible, and on an on-going basis as may be required. The form shown in Exhibit 5.1 is useful to highlight areas where improvement is needed. This procedure allows simple clarification of job expectations and provides an opportunity for the manager to praise and motivate staff. It may be a formal or informal process, but it should be a constructive experience. A copy of the form should be kept on file and the original passed to the employee for his/her reference. The employee should have an opportunity to review the form in the first few days on the job in order to understand the expectations.

Appearance

Travel counsellors should present a professional image. This is particularly important when the counsellors are young and inexperienced. The uniform concept works well in local and provincially-run centres. The "uniform" is actually a dress code which restricts the wearer to a specific set of colours and clothing items.

For example: men may wear a white shirt; black, navy or grey slacks; a blue blazer; and a name tag

women may wear a white blouse; black,navy, or grey slacks or a skirt; a blue vest or blazer; and a name tag.

The code should also express an expectation for keeping the clothing items clean and in proper order. The rules may specifically note that jeans, shorts and running shoes may be comfortable, but do not contribute to a professional image.

The choice of colours and degree of formality varies from TIC to TIC, but the use of an appearance policy is important. The coordination of clothing adds to the pride and confidence that travel counsellors feel. This approach to personal appearance does not make a counsellor appear less friendly, but it does increase the confidence of visitors and the chances of making a good impression.

EXHIBIT 5.1: TRAVEL COUNSELLOR REVIEW FORM

EMPLOYEE: _____ START DATE: _____

POSITION: _____

PERSONAL SUITABILITY

____ Shy/reserved. ____ Congenial/friendly manner. ____ Positive/enjoys the public. ____ Outgoing/enthusiastic individual.

COMMENTS: _____

SELF CONFIDENCE

____ Often lacks self-assurance. Frequently cannot cope with new situations. ____ Usually self-assured. Occasionally has difficulty in handling new situations. ____ Self-reliant in handling new situations and developments. ____ Very self-assured. Handles new situations and developments independently with ease.

COMMENTS: _____

DEPENDABILITY

____ Somewhat unreliable. Needs above average checking. ____ Can be depended on in routine situations. ____ Can be depended on in most situations. ____ Can always be depended on in any situation.

COMMENTS: _____

INITIATIVE

____ Relies on others. Must be told frequently what to do. ____ Needs average direction to do own work. ____ Requires minimal direction and helps others. ____ Self-starter. Always looks for additional work to do.

COMMENTS: _____

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

____ Difficult to work with at times, sometimes antagonizes others. ____ Most relations with others are harmonious under normal situations. ____ Congenial and helpful. Works well with associates. ____ Always works in harmony with others. An excellent team worker.

COMMENTS: _____

ABILITY TO LEARN

____ Keeps pace with peers with extra assistance. ____ Requires normal review and repetition. ____ Requires occasional clarification on new material. ____ Absorbs and understands new material quickly. Requires minimal repetition.

COMMENTS: _____

DECISION-MAKING

____ Often jumps to conclusions without sufficient knowledge. ____ Judgement usually good in familiar situations. ____ Uses good common sense. Usually makes good decisions. ____ Decisions based on thorough analysis of problem. Most often timely and accurate.

COMMENTS: _____

ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING OF OWN WORK

____ More often than not fails to organize and plan work. ____ Does normal amount of planning and organization. ____ Usually organizes work well. ____ Does an excellent job of planning and organizing work.

COMMENTS: _____

APPEARANCE

____ Limited pride/minimal effort. ____ Inconsistent with dress code. ____ Nicely dressed. ____ Always well groomed/smart looking.

COMMENTS: _____

EXHIBIT 5.1: TRAVEL COUNSELLOR REVIEW FORM (continued)

KNOWLEDGE OF JOB (TOURISM)

____ Minimal/asks before attempting to solve. ____ Little direction needed/shows initiative in learning the "ropes". ____ Comprehensive/eager to share idea. ____ Keen interest in work shown/ innovative.

COMMENTS: _____

QUALITY OF WORK

____ More than average amount of errors. ____ Work usually passes review. Has normal amount of errors. ____ Usually thorough. Few errors. ____ Very thorough in performing work. Errors very few if any.

COMMENTS: _____

QUANTITY OF WORK

____ Less than expected. ____ Expected amount of productivity. ____ More than expected. ____ Highly productive.

COMMENTS: _____

ADAPTABILITY

____ Has difficulty in accepting changes and the unexpected. ____ Accepts changed procedures and unexpected after explanation. ____ Able to accept changed procedures and the unexpected. Requires minimal explanation. ____ Understands and accepts changed procedures and the unexpected. Adapts easily and quickly.

COMMENTS: _____

CONTROL

____ Sometimes displays temper. Not always in control of emotions. ____ Fairly even-tempered. Usually emotions in control. ____ Above average self-restraint. Almost always even-tempered. ____ Always very even-tempered. Great self-restraint. Emotions always in control.

COMMENTS: _____

EXPRESSION: WRITTEN

____ Written work needs improvements. ____ Average clarity and conciseness in written work. ____ Point of view clearly expressed in written work. ____ Written work outstanding. Always very clear, concise, and to the point.

COMMENTS: _____

EXPRESSION: ORAL

____ Has some difficulty in expressing him/herself. ____ Average ability to express point of view. ____ Usually speaks very concisely and is easy to understand. ____ Presents point of view orally exceptionally well.

COMMENTS: _____

INTEREST

____ Interest spasmodic. Occasionally enthusiastic. ____ Satisfactory amount of interest and enthusiasm for job. ____ More than average amount of interest and enthusiasm for job. ____ High interest in job and company objectives. Very enthusiastic.

COMMENTS: _____

Employee rated by: _____ Date: _____

I have read this appraisal: _____ Date: _____

Employee

Conduct Pointers

The following are some simple reminders which may help counsellors:

- smile -- even when you answer the phone
- greet visitors as they come in or as they approach the counselling area
- look at the visitor's face when talking
- listen for clues to the visitor's interests
- be enthusiastic about the local tourism attractions
- keep directions clear and simple
- retrieve information quickly
- give each tourist the impression that he/she is important
- always provide accurate information. If you don't know the answer, offer to make some inquiries or tell the visitor that you are unsure. Don't guess.
- thank the visitors for coming in; wish them a nice day; and tell them that you hope they will come back again.

CHAPTER 6

BUDGETS AND FUNDING

Operating Budget

The operating budget for a tourist information service varies with the scope of the service. Some of the key variables which will significantly affect the size of the budget are:

	Example
- the number of days of operation	90 days, 120 days, year-round
- the number of students or travel consellors	2, 3, 10
- the number of permanent staff	none, 1, 4
- the location - single - multiple	separate, part of Chamber office 2, 3, 4
- the degree of promotional activities	none, local brochures produced, organization of tours and convention activities, trade show participation.

Clearly the scope of operation will depend on the tourist orientation of the sponsoring organization, the proximity to a destination area, the perceived importance of tourism to the area, and the availability of financial support.

A typical budget (expressed in 1983 dollars) for a local TIC with the following characteristics is shown below:

- 91 day, summer operation only
- open 7 days per week from 8 AM to 8 PM
- housed in a 600 sq ft building; separate from the Chamber of Commerce office
- very limited promotional activities
- staffed by 3 students - 1 supervisor travel counsellor
  - 2 travel counsellors
- all have attended the travel counsellors techniques course and the supervisor has worked the previous season at the TIC as a travel counsellor
- the supervisor started 2 weeks before the other staff to set up the operation

- all staff work 40 hours weeks

- wage rates are - Supervisor: $5.50/hr
  - Staff: $3.95/hr

- benefits are calculated at 10% (for simplicity)

- Note: there is no rent charged to the TIC for the use of the building and there are no debt servicing nor depreciation charges incurred

Expenses:

Wages - Supervisor	$ 3,300			
- Staff	4,100			
	7,400			
- Benefits	742	$ 8,150	73%	
Operating				
- Stationery and office supplies	$ 500			
- Equipment rentals	150			
- Repair, maintenance and supplies	400			
- Telephone	200			
- Utilities	200			
- Postage	200			
- Travel and transportation	50			
- Training and education	600			
- Accounting	100			
- Insurance	200			
- Uniforms	250			
- Miscellaneous	200	3,050	27%	
		$11,200	100%	

These figures are based on the experience of several local TICs and do not reflect the results of an efficiency study or an examination of one specific TIC. The wage rates listed here were used at 14 of 18 local centres surveyed in BC during the summer of 1983. The figures in this budget can only act as a guide and will vary from location to location. A TIC's actual expenses will vary signficantly from the above if the scope of operations is different from that of the example.

Wage Expenses

In 1983 the minimum hourly wage for TIC staff was effectively set at $3.65 for travel counsellors who had not completed the Travel Counsellors Techniques Course and $3.95 for travel counsellors who had completed the course. The rate reflects the level of wage reimbursement available through the Province of BC's "Summer Youth Employment Program". The financial support of an individual TIC and the local competition for labour will affect the actual wage rate used. In 1983, many centres used the minimum standard, while some offered supplemented rates for both staff and supervisors. (It is common to see a $1.50 per hour rate differential

between the summer travel counsellors and the travel counsellor supervisor.)

In light of the competition for staff, sponsors should consider supplementing these minimum wages in order to attract and retain competent personnel.

TICs that can wait for high school graduates have less upward pressure on the necessary wage rate offering. However, these candidates have had fewer opportunities to acquire the experience necessary. Some TICs also use labour from local senior citizen groups. These people are well experienced for work as a travel counsellor, enjoy contributing, and generally are not concerned about the level of remuneration offered.

Funding Sources and Grants

The source of funding will vary with the scope of the tourist service provided. The primary sources of funding are:

(a) Youth employment programs

- In 1983, the Province of BC's "Summer Youth Employment Program" for Tourist Information Centres provided a wage subsidy at a rate of $3.65 per hour for those who have not completed the Travel Counsellor's Technique Course and $3.95 per hour for those who have completed the course.

- In 1983, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Employment Development Branch, offered its "Summer Canada Employment Program" which provided a rate of $3.65 per hour and $35 per week for program expenses.

(b) Sponsoring organizations

- membership dues
- proceeds from special fund raising activities

(c) Municipalities

- operating assistance grant
- contract to provide specific services for a flat fee
- a portion of business licence revenue.

Other less significant sources of revenue may include

- the sale of souvenirs

- the sale of a service to sponsoring organization members (and non-members) e.g., a direct dial phone service to accommodation operators

- the sale of advertising space in a locally produced brochure or on a billboard sized map.

- the sale of lottery tickets.

TICs require a significant operating budget and, as a result, it is important to ensure financial support prior to starting. The Supervisor of a TIC (particularly if run basically by Summer Staff) must not be expected to spend much time in fund raising activities.

When the operating budget for the TIC is planned, it should not become buried in the budget for the sponsoring organization (e.g., local Chamber of Commerce). The format shown in Exhibit 6.1 provides a structured approach to budget planning for the TIC component of an organization.

The example TIC described above might be funded as follows:

- Province of BC's Summer Youth Employment Program		
(3)($3.95/hr)(40 hr/wk)(13 wks)	$6162	
(1)($3.95/hr)(40 hr/wk)(2 wks)	316	$6,478
- Municipality - Fee for service contract		2,500
- Chamber of Commerce - dues	$1000	
- proceeds from Bingo	1222	2,222
		$11,200

In this example, the Province of BC's "Summer Youth Employment Program" represents 59% of the funding requirements. When either the provincial or federal government programs are relied heavily upon to support the TIC, the planning and hiring process is restricted. The final government decision is not always available when the hiring must be finalized. Hiring delays can cause problems in scheduling staff training programs. Reliance on these government funding programs also may tend to fix the wage rate at the minimum, making hiring more difficult. While the government programs provide an important source of funding, the centres should be considered valuable enough to increase the reliance on local funding sources.

EXHIBIT 6.1: BUDGET FORMAT FOR TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES

Expected Expenses		
Employment Expenses		
Wages and Salaries - supervisor	xxxxx	
- counsellors	xxxxx	
- support staff	xxxxx	
Total Wages and Salaries	xxxxxx	
Benefits	xxx	
Total Employment Expenses		xxxxxx
Operating Expenses		
Stationery and Office Supplies	xxxx	
Equipment Rentals	xxxx	
Repair, Maintenance and Supplies	xxxx	
Telephone	xxxx	
Utilities	xxxx	
Postage	xxxx	
Travel and Transportation	xxxx	
Training and Education	xxxx	
Accounting	xxxx	
Insurance	xxxx	
Uniforms	xxxx	
Miscellaneous	xxxx	
Total Operating Expenses		xxxxxx
Promotion and Other Items		xxxx
Total Expected Expenses		xxxxxx
Expected Revenues		
Government of BC Wage Subsidy	xxxx	
Government of Canada Wage Subsidy	xxxx	
Municipal Grant/Contract	xxxx	
Sponsoring Organization	xxxx	
Special Fund Raising Activities	xxxx	
Sale of Souvenirs	xxxx	
Sale of Advertising Space	xxxx	
Other	xxxx	
Total Expected Revenues		xxxxxx
Expected Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenses on TIC Operations		xxxx

CHAPTER 7

ADMINISTRATION

Hours of Operation

The late afternoon and early evening hours are often the busiest ones, particularly where accommodation is concerned. People on vacation are free from routine and frequently delay decisions. TICs must be prepared to operate long hours during the tourist season. The hours of operation should be posted in an easily visible exterior location. Most seasonal TICs open between May 15 and June 15 and close on or shortly after the Labour Day weekend. During the summer tourist period, serious operations should offer service on a 12 hour day basis 7 days per week. Where budgets restrict a full operation, TIC managers should be aware of the local tourist flows and set the hours and days of operation to accommodate the peaks.

Measuring Service

As stated earlier, the best measure of benefits accruing to an area from the service of a TIC is the number of tourist inquiries. While the number of tourists entering a centre is a factor, those getting personal service from the travel counsellor are most likely to alter their plans in favour of local activities.

In order to monitor progress for a TIC, it is necessary to record the number of inquiries serviced. The following definition should be used:

- one tourist inquiry equals one inquiry made by one party of visitors (e.g., a party of visitors may include mother, father, daughter, son, aunt, uncle friend, etc.)

  Note: one inquiry will typically consist of more than one request for information or of a request for several types of information (e.g., directions and accommodation)

- a separate record should be kept for the following categories of inquiries:

  . personal
  . telephone
  . mail
  . bus loads (each busload is one bus inquiry)

  These definitions are meant to standardize the counting used in all TICs throughout BC.

Exhibit 7.1 illustrates a form which can be used to keep track of the inquiries. For centres where the counsellors

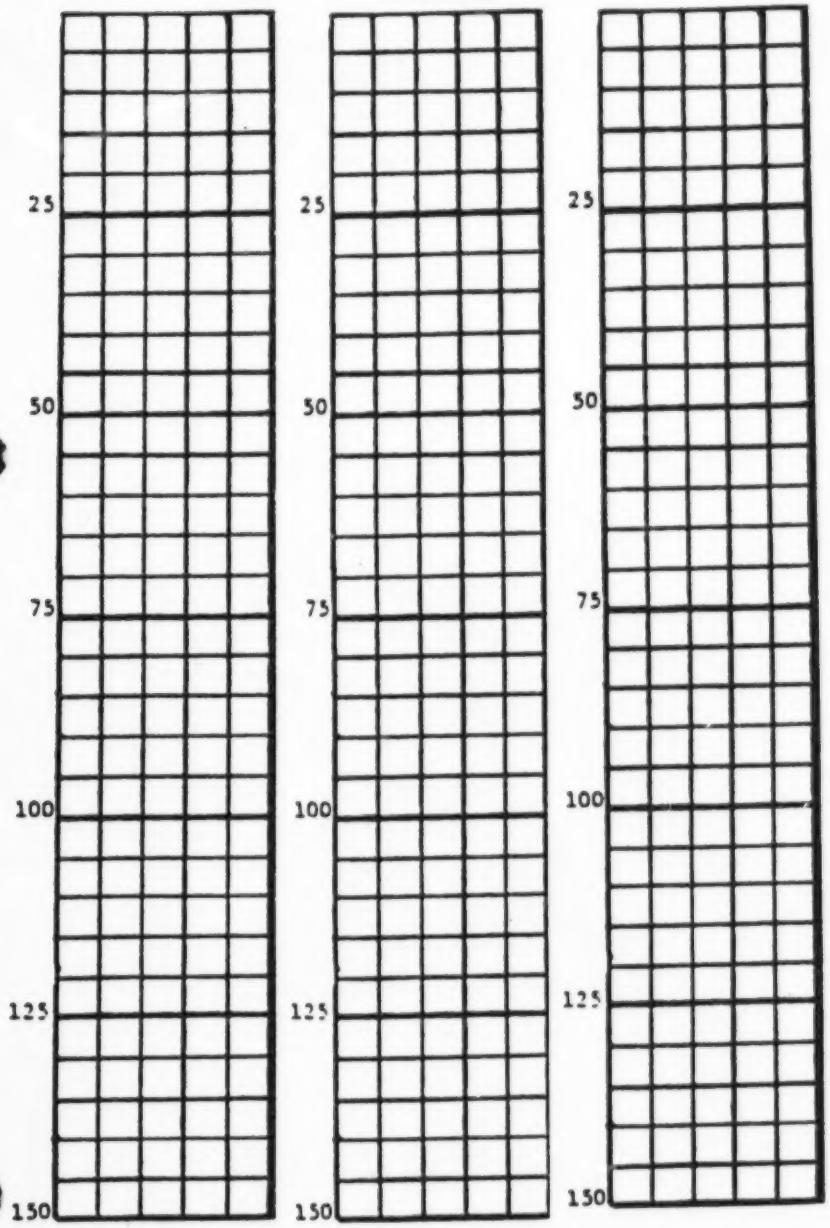
EXHIBIT 7.1: INQUIRY COUNT SHEET

DAY _____ MONTH _____ PAGE ___ of ___

HOURS OF OPERATION _____

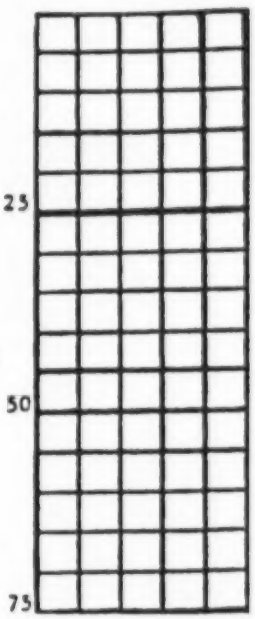
_____
TRAVEL COUNSELLOR

DAILY VISITOR ENQUIRIES



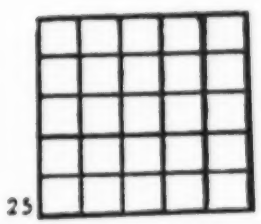
Total _____

DAILY PHONE ENQUIRIES



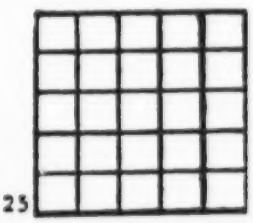
Total _____

DAILY MAIL ENQUIRIES



Total _____

DAILY BUSES



Total _____

work behind a counter, it is simple to mark the form after each enquiry. The process does not require any input from the visitor and does not delay the counselling procedure. Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3 illustrate forms which may be used monthly to summarize the TIC's activity. If it is important for the sponsoring organization to know the actual number of tourists served, apply the provincial average tourist party size factor of 2.5 to the total inquiries. Most centres cannot accurately keep track of the total number of tourists entering the centre (whether personally served or not), so the inquiry process provides a good method of standardized counting. (In centres where the counsellors tend to rove, a hand held "clicker" counter can be used to accumulate the level of inquiries in a day. The rule is still one click per party.) Phone, mail, and bus inquiries can be handled using similar forms.

When determining staff loading, it is often valuable to calculate the number of inquiries handled per hour each day. Over several weeks, this figure will indicate the slow days and therefore the best days for staff to take time off.

It is generally valuable to gather information about the visitor traffic. While a simple visitor survey will provide specific answers, a general (and very common) tool is the guest book. It can be used to monitor the origin of visitors and the seasonal flow from different markets.

Financial Records

As with any business, it is important to keep track of the revenues and expenses incurred by a TIC. Proper accounting is needed to help budget planning for the following year. It also provides ammunition when justification is needed for fund raising. While it is important to know how valuable the TIC is, it is also important to keep costs in perspective.

Planning for Next Season

Another important tool in the planning process is the maintenance of a proper brochure inventory record. this will record the number of each type of brochures used during the year (or season) and will provide a guide for ordering during the next season. Exhibit 7.4 illustrates a simple format to help keep track of brochures.

Each seasonal TIC should also put together a manual of start-up and close-down procedures and activities. The guide should be updated at the close of each season and passed along to the new supervisor for the following year. This is particularly important for many operations with TIC locations which are separated from the sponsoring organization's office. These are usually closed in the off-season and require the completion of a series of specific activities which ensure efficient start-up. In most cases, the students or travel counsellor involved will be new to the job and will require specific task oriented assistance at the outset.

EXHIBIT 7.2: MONTHLY INQUIRY SUMMARY

INFORMATION CENTRE _____ MONTH _____

	Visitor Enquiries	Phone Calls	Mail Enquiries	Bus Loads	Hours Open
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					
31					
TOTAL					
LAST YEAR					
% CHANGE					

EXHIBIT 7.3: ANNUAL INQUIRY SUMMARY

INFORMATION CENTRE _____ YEAR _____

Enter the monthly total for visitors, phone calls, mail enquiries and hours of operation in the appropriate section.

Each box represents a digit, eg. ones, tens, hundreds etc. To enter 3,010 you write | | | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Month	Visitors 000,000	Phone Calls 000,000	Mail Enquiries 000,000	Number of Hours of Operation
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				
YTD Total				
Last Year				

COMPILED BY _____

EXHIBIT 7.4: BROCHURE USAGE RECORD

Period From _____, 19__

To _____, 19__

BROCHURE USAGE RECORD

Brochure Name	Supplier	Number Received Shipments					Total	End of Season Left	Used

Time Sheets

Regardless of the employment arrangements which have been made with the TIC staff, it is advisable to keep accurate records of the amount of hours worked by each employee. If employees are to be paid by the hour, accurate recording of the hours worked is mandatory.

A suggested weekly time sheet for staff is shown in Exhibits 7.5 and 7.6. The document should be filled out by each employee. At the end of the week, the employee totals up his hours for the week, signs his work sheet and turns it in to the supervisor or manager.

Maintenance of Facility

Suitable arrangements should be planned with respect to cleaning and maintaining the TIC and the grounds. If this is to be done by staff, the days of duty for each employee should be clearly outlined on the staff work schedule.

In some locations, the Ministry of Highways will maintain the grounds, in others the TICs have successfully used local people to clean the grounds or floors on a biweekly basis. Of course, the floors should be swept and the interior fixtures dusted each morning. Where washrooms are provided on site, these should be cleaned each day as well. In large, busy centres, washrooms should be checked frequently.

Insurance

While all TICs should carry insurance coverage for the normal items such as damage or loss due to theft, vandalism, and fire, it is also important to consider the liabilities associated with the provision of advice. The travel counsellors are not competing with travel agents. They can only present the information known or available to them and, at times, this information is not up-to-date. A TIC must be careful not to imply a guarantee that the information supplied is in fact accurate. Despite the fact that most information is provided free and in a manner which caters to the expressed interests of the visitor, the possibility of legal liability involving the provision of false or misleading information exists. The specific area of law is referred to as negligent misstatement. If this possibility is considered important to centre management, it is recommended that legal advice be obtained. (Although the issues are not clear-cut, standard error and omission liability insurance has a possible application here.)

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

(_____)

WEEKLY TIME SHEET FOR STAFF

NAME: _____ WEEK BEGINNING _____

DAY	DATE	TIME IN	TIME OUT	TIME IN	TIME OUT	TIME IN	TIME OUT	TOTAL HOURS
SUNDAY								
MONDAY								
TUESDAY								
WEDNESDAY								
THURSDAY								
FRIDAY								
SATURDAY								

Travel Counsellor's signature _____

Total hours
for the week: _____

EXHIBIT 7.5: TIME SHEET FORM

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

(C of C Sun City, BC)

WEEKLY TIME SHEET FOR STAFF

NAME: John Brown **WEEK BEGINNING** August 11, 1969

DAY	DATE	TIME IN	TIME OUT	TIME IN	TIME OUT	TIME IN	TIME OUT	TOTAL HOURS
SUNDAY	Aug 11	10:00	13:00	14:00	16:00	17:00	20:00	8
MONDAY	Aug 12	10:00	12:00	13:00	17:00	18:00	20:00	8
TUESDAY	Aug 13	Day	Off					0
WEDNESDAY	Aug 14	Day	Off					0
THURSDAY	Aug 15	10:00	12:00	13:00	17:00			6
FRIDAY	Aug 16	10:00	13:00	14:00	16:00	17:00	21:00	9
SATURDAY	Aug 17	10:00	12:00	13:00	17:00	18:00	21:00	9

Travel Counsellor's signature John Brown

Total hours for the week: 40

EXHIBIT 7.6: EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED TIME SHEET FORM

Flags and Banners

TICs which plan to use flags and banners as part of their site or entrance markers should recognize that national and provincial flags must be displayed in a specific manner. The following protocol should be used in all cases:

- It is appropriate for the Canadian flag to be flown or displayed by individuals and organizations, but at all times, the flag should be treated with dignity and respect and flown or displayed properly.

- It is not contrary to etiquette to have the flag flying at night.

- No flag, banner or pennant should be flown or displayed above the Canadian flag.

- Flags flown together should be aproximately the same size and flown from separate staffs at the same height.

- The Canadian flag should be given the place of honour when flown or displayed with other flags:

  a) When two or more than three flags are flown together, the Canadian flag should be flown on the left as seen by spectators in front of the flags.

  b) If more than one country is represented, the Canadian flag may be flown at each end of the line of flags.

  c) If three are flown together, the Canadian flag should occupy the central position with the next ranking flag to the left and the third ranking flag to the right as seen by spectators in front of the flags.

- When a flag becomes worn, noticeably faded or otherwise unfit for service, it should be disposed of privately by burning.

- The position of the Canadian flag when flying at half-mast will depend on its size, the length of the flagstaff and its location; but as a general rule, the centre of the flag should be exactly half-way down the staff.

- Half-masting is appropriate

  a) throughout Canada, on the death of the Sovereign or a member of the Royal Family related in the first degree to the Sovereign,

the Governor General, the Prime Minister of Canada, a former Prime Minister of Canada, or a federal Cabinet Minister

b) within a province, on the death of the Lieutenant-Governor, the Provincial Premier, or another person similarly honoured

c) within his own riding, on the death of the Member of the House of Commons, or the Member of the Provincial Legislature.

. The following standard sizes are used:

Pole	Flag
5.5 to 6.5 m	1 x 2 m
9.75 to 11.5 m	1.5 x 3 m
13 to 14.75 m	2 x 4 m
16.25 m	2.5 x 5 m

Security

The security of the premises and of the staff may take a variety of forms, but it is clearly an important issue for the sponsoring organizations. Isolated sites can be particularly vulnerable and this aspect may affect staffing decisions. In such locations, the TIC should have an inside phone available for staff use.

CHAPTER 8

STANDARDS FOR NETWORK ACCREDITATION

In accordance with the BC TIC Network and benefits of membership outlined in Chapter 1, Tourist Information Centres which meet the following minimum standards or requirements may apply for membership in the BC TIC Network and participate in the benefits which accrue therefrom. (These standards are primarily directed at manned TICs.)

A) Service

- provide sufficient reception area to comfortably service visitors
- provide a bench or chairs inside or immediately outside the TIC
- provide adequate Reserved for Tourists parking space outside the TIC (not applicable for TICs catering primarily to foot traffic)
- maintain facilities in a clean and tidy manner.

B) Information

- provide at least 2 brochure racks: one to display government brochures and/or regional information; one to display local commercial operations or attractions
- keep brochures stocked so that bare areas do not occur.

C) Hours of Operation

- be open for at least:
  - . 7 consecutive hours per day excluding lunch
  - . 9 consecutive weeks
  - . 6 days per week including Saturday and Sunday during the period from July 1 to August 31
- post the hours of operation in a visible place on the building exterior
- individual consideration will be given to TICs which operate in locations where the summer period is not the peak tourist season.

D) Training

- at least half of the travel counsellors must have attended the Travel Counsellor's Techniques Course

- provide on-site or inhouse training which includes one day of area familiarization to consist of a trip and/or a film presentation.

E) Record Keeping

- supply the Ministry of Tourism with a record of the number of inquiries serviced for each month the TIC is open.

F) Signs

- each TIC must be advance marked by the standard Department of Highways approach sign along the major traffic route

- each TIC site must be marked by a sign which clearly identifies the site or building as a Tourist Information Centre. (Use of the the standard format is suggested.)

Local centres which apply as "A Centres" must meet the following additional requirements:

Under "Information"

- provide at least 3 brochure racks: one to display government brochures and general regional literature; one to display promotional literature from the region at hand (or regions if the location is a major gateway to more than one region); and one to display local commercial operations or attractions.

Under "Training"

- all travel counsellors must have attended the Travel Counsellor's Techniques course; provide on-site training which includes at least one day of area familiarization and at least one day or region familiarization to be coordinated by the RTA manager.

Note:

A Local A centre performs the roles of:

- dispersing tourists throughout the region
- promoting their region's tourist opportunities
- promoting their local tourist opportunities

whereas a Local B centre focuses its efforts on the promotion of local tourist opportunities. (These latter centres tend to be located in destination areas.)

CHAPTER 9

CONTACTS

The following is a list of organizations that may be helpful to TIC operators:

Service/Need	Organization and Address
BC Government Publications	See Exhibit 9.1
BC Government Brochure Acceptance Standards	Visitor Services Branch Ministry of Tourism 1117 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z2
BC TIC Network Application	Visitor Services Branch Ministry of Tourism Visitor Services 1117 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z2
Travel Counsellors Techniques Course Dates	Education Services Branch Ministry of Tourism 1117 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z2
Hospitality Industry Training Courses	Education Services Branch Ministry of Tourism 1117 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z2
Highway Approach Signs	See Exhibit 9.2
BC Government Student Wage Subsidy Program	Employment Opportunities Programs Branch Ministry of Labour 808 Douglas Street Victoria, BC V8W 2B6
Federal Student Wage Subsidy Program	Employment Development Branch Employment & Immigration Canada 45 Bastion Square Victoria, BC
BC Tourism Research Available	Policy, Development & Planning Branch Ministry of Tourism 1117 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z2
Regional Promotions	Individual Regional Mangers See Exhibt 9.3
Senior Citizens Activities Program	New Horizons Bastion Square Rm 508 - 1230 Government St Victoria, BC V8W 2P1

EXHIBIT 9.1: SOURCES FOR PUBLICATIONS

Maintaining a good supply of current resource publications is vital to the operation of an Information Centre. The following list includes most of the major publications available.

BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Provincial	
BC Accommodation Guide British Columbia Road Map and Parks Guide Travellers Handbook Dive BC Ski British Columbia (Seasonal) Royal Hudson	Visitor Services Branch Ministry of Tourism 1117 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z2
Regional	For information, consult the Regional Manager for the area in question
Municipal	Write to local Chamber of Commerce Offices for publications on a particular town or city.
Provincial Parks Recreation Historical	Parks & Outdoor Recreation Branch Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing 1019 Wharf Street Victoria, BC, V8W 2Y9
Government of Canada National Parks Canada Road Map Touring Canada - General Travel Information Canada I Declare	Tourism Canada 240 Sparks Street Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H6
Fishing and Hunting Tidal Water Fishing Regulations (federal)	Department of Fisheries & Ocean 1090 West Pender Vancouver, BC, V6E 2M6
British Columbia Fresh Water Fishing Regulations British Columbia Hunting Regulations	Fish and Wildlife Branch Ministry of Environment 1010 Wharf Street Victoria, BC V8W 2Z1

EXHIBIT 9.2: HIGHWAY REGIONS AND DISTRICTS

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS

January 1984

REGION NO. 1 - BURNABY
HIGHWAY DISTRICT

North Vancouver	1690 Main Street	V7J 1E3	987-9311
Gibsons	P.O. Box 740	VON 1V0	886-2294
New Westminster	309 - 6th Street	V3L 3A7	525-5621
Chilliwack	9369 Mill Street	V2P 4N3	795-7256

REGION NO. 2 - KAMLOOPS
HIGHWAY DISTRICT

Kamloops	523 Columbia Street	V2C 2T9	374-4112
Salmon Arm	P.O. Box 759	V0E 2T0	832-8177
Vernon	2501 B - 48th Avenue	V1T 3P9	545-9144
Penticton	166 Main Street	V2A 5A4	492-3109
Merritt	P.O. Box 218	V0K 2B0	387-4244
Lillooet	P.O. Box 460	V0K 1V0	256-4255
100 Mile House	P.O. Box 490	V0K 2E0	395-4021
Kelowna	1420 Water Street	V1Y 1J2	762-2406

REGION NO. 3 - NELSON
HIGHWAY DISTRICT

Nelson	820 Nelson Avenue	V1L 4S4	352-2211
Rossland	P.O. Box 1119	V0G 1Y0	362-7331
Grand Forks	P.O. Box 880	V0H 1H0	442-2118
New Denver	P.O. Box 159	V0G 1S0	358-2212/3
Cranbrook	14A - 13th Avenue S.	V1G 2X3	489-3521
Fernie	P.O. Box 1000	V0B 1M0	423-6896
Golden	P.O. Box 1200	V0A 1H0	344-2295
Revelstoke	P.O. Box 710	V0E 2S0	837-5116
Creston	P.O. Box 580	V0B 1G0	428-9307

REGION NO. 4 - PRINCE GEORGE
HIGHWAY DISTRICT

Prince George	#433 1011 - 4th Ave.	V2L 4Y2	562-8131
Quesnel	408 - 350 Barlow St.	V2J 2C1	992-5591
Dawson Creek	1201 - 103rd Avenue	V1G 4J2	782-5931
Fort St. John	9711 - 100th Avenue	V1J 1Y2	787-1111
Vanderhoof	P.O. Box 409	V0J 3A0	567-4714
McBride	P.O. Box 279	V0J 2E0	569-2219
Williams Lake	303- 35 2nd Avenue S.	V2G 1R8	392-6261

EXHIBIT 9.2: HIGHWAY REGIONS AND DISTRICTS (continued)

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS

January 1984

REGION NO. 5 - TERRACE
HIGHWAY DISTRICT

Prince Rupert	204-815 First Ave.W.	V8J 1B3	624-2121
Terrace	300 - 4546 Park Ave.	V8G 1V4	635-6254
Dease Lake	General Delivery	V0C 1L0	771-4511
Smithers	Bag 5000	V0J 2N0	847-4411
Burns Lake	Box 288	V0J 2P0	692-7161

REGION NO. 6 - NANAIMO
HIGHWAY DISTRICT

Nanaimo	190 Wallace Street	V9R 5B1	754-1391
Saanich	103-4475 Viewmont	V8Z 5K8	479-9344
Port Alberni	4152 Redford Street	V9Y 3R5	723-3823
Courtenay, Highway	950 Cumberland Road	V9N 2E4	334-4432
Courtenay, Ferry	554-5th Street	V9N 1K3	338-7751

EXHIBIT 9.3: REGIONAL TOURIST ASSOCIATIONS

REGION A	Managing Director Tourism Association of Vancouver Island Room M36, 635 Humboldt Street Victoria, BC V8W 1A7	382-3551
REGION B	Managing Director Southwestern British Columbia Tourist Association PO Box 94449 (#2 - 5760 Minoru Boulevard) Richmond, BC V6Y 2A8	270-6801
REGION C	Regional Manager Okanagan Similkameen Tourist Association Jubilee Pavillion (185 Lakeshore Drive) Penticton, BC V2A 1B7	492-6611
REGION D	Regional Manager Kootenay Boundary Visitors Association PO Box 172 (Castlegar Airport) Nelson, BC V1L 5P9	365-8461
REGION E	Manager Thompson Country Tourist Association PO Box 298 (114 Hudson Street) Salmon Arm, BC V0E 2T0	832-8028
REGION F	Managing Director Cariboo Tourist Association PO Box 4900 (#6 - 160 Oliver Street) Williams Lake, BC V2G 2V8	392-2226
REGION G	Manager Yellowhead 16 Tourist Association PO Box 1030 (1277 Main Street) Smithers, BC V0J 2N0	847-5227
REGION H	Tourist Coordinator Peace River Alaska Highway Tourist Association c/o City Hall 10631 - 100th Street Fort St. John, BC V1J 3Z5	785-2544
REGION I	Manager BC Rocky Mountain Visitors Association PO Box 10 (495 Wallinger Avenue) Kimberley, BC V1A 2Y5	427-7469